Æsop's

FABLES.



Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.
Job, xii. 7.

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CHILDREN'S BOOK
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LOS ANGELES



PREFACE.

IN presenting to the little readers this book of Fables, no wish is entertained to create in them a belief that there ever was a time when beasts and birds could talk. A fable is a feigned narration, designed to convey instruction. The practice of teaching in this way is of very ancient origin, and is continued to this day. Reproof thus administered has often produced the desired effect when open rebuke would have served only to offend or irritate. Most of these fables are attributed to Æsop, a person whose history is involved in much obscurity. We know but little more of him than that he lived in a remote period of time, and wrote many amusing and instructive fables.

Select Fables.

Boys and Frogs.



A company of mischievous boys were watching at the side of a pond, and whenever any of the frogs put up their heads, the boys would be pelting them with stones. "Children," says one of the frogs, "you should consider, that though this may be sport to you, it is death to us."

APPLICATION.

The cruel practices many children are in, of throwing stones at harmless birds and other creatures, of torturing flies, &c. setting the dogs on cats to worry them, or in any way afflicting any animals for sport, show that their education has not been what it ought to have been; or that they are very unfeeling children, and their morals have become depraved; and this disposition, if lived in as they grow up, will end in brutality and tyranny.

No pleasing every body.



An old man and his little son were driving a nag before them to market to sell: "Why, have you

no more wit," says one to the man on the way, "than you and your son to trudge afoot, and let the nag go light?" So the man sat the boy upon the nag, and footed it himself. "Why, my lad," says another after this to the boy, "are you so lazy as to ride, and let your old father go afoot?" The man, on hearing this, took down the boy and mounted himself; when a third person met them, and said, "Have you no more feeling for that poor little child, than to ride yourself, and let him walk after you?" So the father takes his son on behind him; when a fourth person cries out, "Is that nag your own?" The old man replies, "Yes;" the other observed, "It does not appear likely, seeing how you load him." Finally, still striving to please, the old man and his son tied the nag's feet together, and strung him on a pole, and each took an end upon his shoulder, and staggered on; this made sport indeed for all who saw it; insomuch,

that the people shouted, and whether the noise affrighted the beast, or from the uneasiness of his situation, he struggled so hard, as they crossed a bridge, that he broke from their shoulders, tumbled into the river, and they lost him. Thus, in striving to please all, they displeased all, and lost their nag in the bargain.

APPLICATION.

This fable shows the impossibility of pleasing every body; and the necessity of a person after being careful to discover what is right, to act up to the dictates of his own conscience, let the world say what it may.



The Lark and her Young.



A Lark that had young ones in a field of corn which was almost ripe, was under some fear lest the reapers should come to reap it before the young brood were fledged, and able to remove from the place. Wherefore upon flying abroad to look for food, she left this charge with them, that they should take notice what they heard talked of in her absence, and tell her when she came back again. When she was gone, they heard the owner of the corn call to his son, Well, says he, I think this corn is ripe enough; I would have

you go, early, to-morrow, and desire our friends and neighbours to come and help us reap it. When the old Lark came home, the young ones fell a quivering and chirping round her, and told her what had happened, begging her to remove them as fast as she could. The mother bid them be easy: for, says she, if the owner depends upon friends and neighbours, I am pretty sure the corn will not be reaped to-morrow. The next day she went out again upon the same occasion, and left the same orders with them as before. The owner came, and stayed, expecting those he had sent to: but the sun grew hot, and nothing was done, for not a man came to help him. Then, says he to his son, I perceive these friends of ours are not to be depended upon, so that you must even go to your uncles and cousins, and tell them that I desire they would be here betimes to-morrow to help us reap. Well, this the young ones, in a great fright, re-

ported also to their mother. If that be all, says she, do not be frightened, children; for kindred and relations do not use to be so very forward to serve one another. But, take particular notice what you hear said the next time, and be sure you let me know it. She went abroad the next day as usual; and the owner finding his relations as slack as the rest of his neighbours, said to his son, Hark, George, do you get a couple of good sickles ready against to-morrow morning, and we will even reap the corn ourselves. When the young ones told their mother this, then said she, we must be gone indeed; for, when a man undertakes to do his business himself, it is not so likely that he will be disappointed. So she removed her young ones immediately, and the corn was reaped the next day by the owner himself and his son.

APPLICATION

Never depend upon the assistance of friends and relations in any thing which you are able

to do yourself; for nothing is more fickle and uncertain. The man who relies upon another for the execution of any affair of importance, is not only kept in wretchedness and slavish suspense, while he expects the issue of the matter, but generally meets with a disappointment. While he who lays the chief stress of his business upon himself, and depends upon his own industry and attention for the success of his affairs, is in the fairest way to attain his end; and, if at last he should miscarry, he has this to comfort him, that it was not through his own negligence, and a vain expectation of the assistance of friends.

Cock and Fox.



A Cock being perched among the branches of a lofty tree, crowed

aloud, so that the shrillness of his voice echoed through the wood, and invited a Fox to the place, which was prowling in that neighbourhood in quest of his prey. But Renard, finding the Cock was inaccessible, by reason of the height of his situation, had recourse to stratagem in order to decoy him down: so, approaching the tree, Cousin says he, I am heartily glad to see you; but, at the same time, I cannot forbear expressing my uneasiness at the inconvenience of the place, which will not let me pay my respects to you in a handsomer manner; though I suppose you will come down presently, and so that difficulty is easily removed. Indeed, cousin, says the Cock, to tell you the truth I do not think it safe to venture myself upon the ground, for though I am convinced how much you are my friend, yet I may have the misfortune to fall into the clutches of some other beast, and what will become of me then? O dear, says Renard,

is it possible you can be so ignorant as not to know of the peace that has been lately proclaimed between all kinds of Birds and Beasts, and that we are for the future, to forbear hostilities on all sides, and to live in the utmost love and harmony, and that under penalty of suffering the severest punishment that can be inflicted? All this while, the Cock seemed to give little attention to what was said, but stretched out his neck as if he saw something at a distance. Cousin, says the Fox, what is that you look at so earnestly? Why, says the Cock, I think I see a pack of hounds a little way off. Oh, then, says the Fox, your humble servant, I must be gone. Nay, pray, cousin, do not go, says the Cock, I am just coming down; surely you are not afraid of dogs in these peaceable times. No, no, says he; but ten to one whether they have heard of the proclamation yet.

APPLICATION.

It is very agreeable to see craft repelled by cunning; more especially to behold the snares of the wicked broken and defeated by the discreet management of the innocent. The moral of this fable principally puts us in mind, not to be too credulous towards the insinuations of those who are already distinguished by their want of faith and honesty.

Fox and Grapes.



A Fox, very hungry, chanced to come into a vineyard, where there hung bunches of charming ripe grapes; but so high, that he leaped till he quite tired himself without

being able to reach one of them. At last, says he, let who will take them, they are but green and sour; so I will even let them alone.

APPLICATION.

This fable is a good reprimand to those persons, who, because they would never be thought to be disappointed in any of their pursuits, pretend a dislike to every thing which they cannot obtain.

A Father and his Children.



A countryman who had lived handsomely in the world upon his honest labour and industry, was desirous his sons should do so after

him; and being now upon his deathbed, my dear children, says he, I reckon myself bound to tell you, before I depart, that there is a considerable treasure hid in my vineyard; wherefore, pray be sure to dig, and search narrowly for it when I am gone. The father died, and the sons fell immediately to work upon the vineyard. They turned it up over and over, and not one penny of money was to be found there; but the profit of the next vintage expounded the riddle; for the ground being so well stirred and loosened, it produced a plentiful crop: a treasure indeed!

APPLICATION.

There is no wealth like that which comes by the blessing of God, upon honest labour and warrantable industry. Here is an incitement to an industrious course of life, by a consideration of the profit, the innocence, and the virtue of such an application. There is one great comfort in hand, beside the hope and assurance of more to come. It was a touch of art in the father to cover his meaning in such a manner as to create a curiosity, and an earnest desire in his sons to find it out.

And it was a treble advantage to them besides; for there was health in the exercise, profit in the discovery, and the comfort of a good conscience in discharging the duty of filial obedience.

The Fox without a Tail.



A Fox being caught in a steel-trap, by his tail, was glad to compound for his escape with the loss of it; but, upon coming abroad into the world, he began to be so sensible of the disgrace such a defect would bring upon him, that he almost wished he had died, rather than left it behind him. However, to make the

best of a bad matter, he formed a project in his head, to call an assembly of the rest of the Foxes, and propose it for their imitation, as a fashion which would be very agreeable and becoming. He did so; and made a long harangue upon the unprofitableness of tails in general, and endeavoured chiefly to show the awkwardness and inconvenience of a Fox's tail in particular, adding, that it would be both more graceful and more expeditious, to be altogether without them; and that for his part, what he had only imagined and conjectured before, he now found by experience, for that he never enjoyed himself so well, and found himself so easy, as he had done since he had cut off his tail. He said no more, but looked about with a brisk air to see what proselytes he had gained; when a sly old thief in the company, who understood trap, answered him with a leer, I believe you may have found a convenience in parting with your tail, and when

we are in the same circumstances, perhaps we may do so too.

APPLICATION.

If men were but generally as prudent as foxes, they would not suffer so many silly fashions to obtain as are daily brought into vogue, for which, scarcely any reason can be assigned, besides the humour of some conceited vain creature.

The Bear and two Friends.



Two men being to travel through a forest together, mutually promised to stand by each other in any dan-

ger they should meet upon the way. They had not gone far, before a bear came rushing towards them out of a thicket; upon which, one being a light, nimble fellow, got up into a tree; the other falling flat upon his face, and holding his breath, lay still, while the bear came up and smelled at him; but the creature supposing him to be a dead carcass, went back again into the wood, without doing him the least harm.—When all was over, the man who had climbed the tree, came down to his companion, and with a pleasant smile, asked him what the bear said to him; for, says he, I took notice that he put his mouth very close to your ear. Why, replied the other, he charged me to take care for the future, not to put any confidence in those, who in the time of distress, will leave their friends in the lurch.

APPLICATION.

Though nothing is more common than to hear people profess services and friendship

where there is no occasion for them; yet scarce any thing is so hard to be found as a true friend, who will assist us in the time of danger and difficulty.

Father and contentious Children.



An old man had many sons, who were often falling out with one another. When the father had exerted his authority, and used other means in order to reconcile them, and all to no purpose, at last, he had recourse to this expedient; he ordered his sons to be called before him, and a short bundle of rods to be

brought ; and then commanded them, one by one, to try if, with all their might and strength, they could any of them break it. They all tried, but to no purpose ; for the rods being closely and compactly bound up together, it was impossible for the force of man to do it. After this, the father ordered the bundle to be untied, and gave a single rod to each of his sons, at the same time bidding them to try to break it : and, when each of them did with all imaginable ease, the father addressed himself to them to this effect : O, my sons, behold the power of unity ! for if you, in like manner, would but keep yourselves strictly conjoined in the bonds of friendship, it could not be in the power of any mortal to hurt you ; but when once the ties of brotherly affection are dissolved, how soon do you fall to pieces, and are liable to be overcome by every injurious hand that assaults you !

APPLICATION.

Nothing is more necessary towards completing and continuing the well-being of mankind, than their entering into, and preserving friendships and alliances. The safety of a government depends chiefly upon this; and, therefore, it is weakened and exposed to its enemies, in proportion as it is divided by parties. *A kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation.*

A Dog and his Shadow.



A Dog crossing a little rivulet with a piece of flesh in his mouth, saw his own shadow represented in the mirror of the limpid stream;

and believing it to be another dog, who was carrying another piece of flesh, he could not forbear catching at it; but was so far from getting any thing by his greedy design, that he dropped the piece he had in his mouth, which immediately sunk to the bottom, and was irrecoverably lost.

APPLICATION.

He that catches at more than belongs to him justly deserves to lose what he has. Yet nothing is more common, and, at the same time, more pernicious than this selfish principle. It prevails from the king to the peasant; and all orders and classes of men, are, more or less, infected with it.



Wolf and Crane.



A Wolf had gotten a bone in his throat, and promised a Crane a very considerable reward to help him out with it. The Crane did him the good office, and then claimed his promise. Why, how now, impudence! says the other, do you put your head into the mouth of a Wolf, and then, when you've brought it out again safe and sound, do you talk of a reward? Why, sirrah, you have your head again, and is not that sufficient recompense?

APPLICATION.

The bone in the throat of the wolf may be understood of any sort of pinch or calamity,

either in body, liberty, or fortune. How many do we see daily, gaping and struggling with bones in their throats, who, when they have gotten them drawn out, have attempted the ruin of their deliverers! The world. in short is full of practices and examples to answer the intent of this fable; and there are many consciences that will be touched with the reading of it, whose names are not written in their foreheads.

Mouse and Frog.



There once was a great emulation between a Frog and a Mouse, which should be master of the fen, and wars ensued upon it. But the crafty Mouse, lurking under the grass in

ambuscade, made sudden sallies, and often surprised the enemy at a disadvantage. The Frog, excelling in strength, and being more able to leap abroad and take the field, challenged the Mouse to single combat. The Mouse accepted the challenge; and each of them entered the lists armed with a point of a bulrush, instead of a spear. A Kite sailing in the air, beheld them afar off; and while they were eagerly bent on each other, and pressing on to the duel, this fatal enemy descended souse upon them, and with her crooked talons, carried off both the champions.

APPLICATION.

Nothing so much exposes a man's weak side, and lays him so open to an enemy, as passion and malice He, whose attention is wholly fixed upon forming a project of revenge, is ignorant of the mischiefs that may be hatching against him from some other quarter, and, upon the attack, is unprovided with the means of defending or securing himself.

Fox and Crow.



A Crow having taken a piece of cheese out of a cottage window, flew up into a high tree with it, in order to eat it. A Fox observing it, came and sat underneath, and began to compliment the Crow upon the subject of her beauty. I protest, says he, I never observed it before, but your feathers are of a more delicate white, than any that I ever saw in my life. Ah! what a fine shape and graceful turn of the body is there! And I make no question but you have a tolerable voice. If it is but as fine as your complexion, I do

not know a bird that can pretend to stand in competition with you. The Crow, tickled with this very flattering language, nestled and riggled about, and hardly knew where she was; but thinking the Fox a little dubious as to the particular of her voice, and having a mind to set him right in that matter, began to sing, and, at the same instant, let the cheese drop out of her mouth. This being what the Fox wanted, he chopped it up in a moment; and trotted away, laughing to himself at the easy credulity of the Crow.

APPLICATION.

They that love flattery (as, it is to be feared, too many do) are in a fair way to repent of their foible at the long run. And yet, how few there are among the whole race of mankind, who may be said to be full proof against its attacks! The gross way in which it is managed by some silly practitioners, is enough to alarm the dullest apprehension.

Lion and Mouse.



A generous Lion having gotten into his clutches a poor Mouse, at her earnest supplication, he let her go. A few days after, the Lion being hampered in a net, found the benefit of his former mercy; for, this very Mouse, in his distress, remembering the favour done her, set herself to work upon the couplings of the net, gnawed the threads to pieces, and so delivered her preserver.

APPLICATION.

There is nothing so little, but greatness may come to stand in need of it: and, therefore, prudence and discretion ought to have a place in clemency, as well as in piety and justice:

'tis doing as one would be done by: and the obligation is yet stronger, when there is gratitude as well as honour and good nature in the case.

Eagle and Tortoise.



A Tortoise once took it in his head to fly, and he applied to an Eagle to teach him. The Eagle told him, 'twas a thing against nature and common sense; but the more one was against it, the more the other was for it; whereupon the Eagle took him up high into the air, and dropped him down upon a rock, which dashed him to pieces.

APPLICATION.

We see a thousand instances in the world, as ridiculous as this in the fable, of men made for one condition, who yet affect another. The fiction of Phæton, in the chariot of the Sun; of the Frog, vying bulk with an Ox; and of the Tortoise, riding upon the wings of the wind; all pretend to prescribe bounds and measures to our exorbitant passions; and, at the same time, to show us in the issue, that unnatural attempts are generally attended with fatal consequences.

Ape and her Young.



An Ape having two young ones, was dotingly fond of one, but disregarded and slighted the other. One day, she chanced to be surprised by

the hunters, and had much ado to get off. However, she did not forget her favourite young one, which she took up in her arms, that it might be the more secure; the other, which she neglected, by natural instinct leaped upon her back, and so away they scampered together.—But it unluckily fell out, that the dam, in her precipitate flight, blinded with haste, dashed her favourite's head against a stone and killed it. The hated one, clinging close to her rough back, escaped all the danger of the pursuit.

APPLICATION.

This fable is designed to expose the folly of some parents, who, by indulging and humouring their favourite children, spoil and ruin them; while those of whom they have been less fond, have done very well.

Crow and Pitcher.



A thirsty Crow found a Pitcher with a little water in it, but it lay so low he could not come at it. He tried first to break the pot, and then to overturn it; but it was both too strong and too heavy for him. At last he bethought himself of a device that did his business; which was dropping a great many little pebbles into the water, and so raising it, till he had it within reach.

APPLICATION.

We ought not by any means, to be discouraged by seeming impossibilities in our laudable pursuits after what is necessary or

fit for us or our families. We are on the contrary, to use all our honest endeavours, and double our diligence, to overcome all such difficulties as may be thrown in the way of our attaining blessings which are necessary to our welfare. How many inventions and fine arts have been struck out by virtue of necessity which otherwise would never have been discovered!

A Daw in borroned Feathers.



A Daw having tricked himself up with all the gay feathers he could muster together, he valued himself upen them above all the birds in the air. This got him the envy of all his companions, who, upon a dis-

covery of the truth, fell to pluming him by consent; and when every bird had taken his own feather, the silly Daw was reduced to his primitive state, and found a lasting contempt added to his former poverty.

APPLICATION.

Every thing is best, and every man happiest in the state and condition wherein nature has placed him: but if daws will be setting up for peacocks, or sheep for lions, they must expect, and content themselves to be laughed at for their pains.



Fir-Tree and Bramble.



A tall straight Fir-tree that stood towering up in the midst of the forest, was so proud of his dignity and high station, that he overlooked the little shrubs which grew beneath him. A Bramble, being one of the inferior order, desired to know what he meant by it. Says the Fir-tree, I look upon myself as the first tree for beauty and for rank of any in the forest: my spiring top shoots up into the clouds, and my branches display themselves with a perpetual beauty and verdure; while you lie grovelling upon the ground, liable

to be crushed by every foot that comes near you. All this may be true, replied the Bramble; but when the woodman has marked you out for public use, and the sounding axe comes to be applied to your root, I am mistaken, if you would not be glad to change conditions with the lowest of us.

APPLICATION.

If the great were to reckon on the mischief to which they are exposed, and if poor private men were to consider the dangers which they many times escape purely by being so, notwithstanding the seeming difference there appears to be between them, a reasonable man would choose to be of the latter, as knowing upon what a steady and safe security it is established. For the higher a man is exalted, the fairer mark he gives, and the more unlikely he is to escape a storm.

Body and Limbs.



The hands and the feet at a time were in a desperate mutiny against the body. They knew no reason, they said, why the one should pamper itself with the fruit of the others' labour; and if the body would not work for company, they would be no longer at the charge of maintaining it. Upon this mutiny, they kept the body so long without nourishment, that all the parts suffered for it; insomuch that the hands and feet came in the conclusion to find their mistake, and were willing then to do their office; but it was too late,

for the body was so pined with over fasting, that it was wholly out of condition to receive the benefit of relief; and so they all perished together.

APPLICATION.

This fable or the substance of it, was spoken by Menimus Agrippa, a famous Roman consul and general, when he was deputed by the senate to appease a dangerous tumult and insurrection of the people, who obstinately refused, on a certain occasion, to pay the taxes which were laid upon them, because they could not live as magnificently or easy as their superiors. The reasoning was good the hint was taken, and the people returned to their duty. Every member in the body, and so in the community, has its office; and every part contributes respectively to the preservation and service of the whole; and not even a finger suffers, but the whole feels it.

Oak and Willow.



In a controversy betwixt an Oak and a Willow, the oak upbraided the willow, that it was weak and wavering, and gave way to every blast; while he scorned, he said, to bend to the most raging tempests, which he despised as they whistled by him. A little while after this dispute, it blew a most violent storm. The willow plied and gave way to the gust, and still recovered itself again, without receiving any damage: but the oak, stubbornly resisting the hurricane, was torn up by the roots.

APPLICATION.

There are many cases in which a man must either bend or break; and although no exigency can justify departure from our duty, yet where it does not effect this, it is wise to comply with necessity or yield to the humour of others, rather than to resist to our own destruction.

Old and Young Crab.



It is said to be the nature of the Crab-fish to go backward. However, a mother-crab one day reproved her daughter, and was in a great passion with her untoward awkward gait, which she desired her to alter, and

not to move in a way so contrary to the rest of the world. Indeed, mother, says the young crab, I walk as decently as I can, and to the best of my knowledge; but, if you would have me go otherwise, I beg you would be so good as to practise it first, and show me, by your example how you would have me behave myself.

APPLICATION.

Example works a great deal more than precept: for words without practice will have but little effect When we do as we say, 'tis a confirmation of the rule; but when our lives and doctrines do not agree, it looks as if the lessons were either too hard for us, or that we ourselves thought the advice we gave not worth the while to follow. We should mend our own manners, before we offer to reform our neighbours, and not condemn others, for what we do ourselves.

FINIS.